

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USMISSION GENEVA

USDEL SALT TWO GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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USMISSION NATO

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GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US

SUBJECT: SOVIET PUNDITS ON U.S. MIDDLE EAST POLICY

1. SUMMARY: DURING SEPARATE MEETINGS APRIL 8 WITH
CONGRESSMAN FRELINGHUYSEN, USA INSTITUTE DIRECTOR ARBATOV AND
SUPREME SOVIET DEPUTY VLADIMIR L. KUDRYAVTSEV (WHO
IS ALSO PROMINENT IZVESTIYA FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMENTATOR)
INDICATED CONCERN THAT U.S. IS TRYING TO GO
IT ALONE IN MIDDLE EAST AND THAT SOVIET INTERESTS IN
THE AREA MIGHT BE DAMAGED. ARBATOV HINTED THAT AMERICAN
INFLUENCE HAS CONTRIBUTED TO SOVIET DIFFICULTIES WITH
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EGYPT. END SUMMARY.

2. ARBATOV PLAYED DOWN MIDDLE EAST DISENGAGEMENT, CLAIMING THESE INITIATIVES WERE TACTICAL AND THAT TO A CERTAIN EXTENT DISENGAGEMENT COULD EVEN "REDUCE THE ZEAL TO MOVE FORWARD" TOWARD GENERAL SETTLEMENT. HE NOTED THAT DISENGAGEMENT EFFORTS SEEM TO HAVE PUT GENEVA IN THE BACKGROUND. HE FELT THAT WORK IN GENEVA MUST BE RESUMED AND THAT, WHATEVER THE DETAILS OF A SETTLEMENT, SOVIET UNION AND U.S. MUST BE MAJOR QUARANTORS OF PEACE AND EXERT INFLUENCE ON BOTH SIDES. FOR THE SOVIET UNION THIS WOULD BE MORE DIFFICULT, SINCE "WE HAVE MORE CLIENTS." ARBATOV STRESSED THAT MEANINGFUL SETTLEMENT REQUIRED SOVIET-AMERICAN COOPERATION AND THAT IF ATTEMPTS WERE MADE TO ACT WITHOUT SOVIET UNION, THIS WOULD CREATE ADDITIONAL DIFFICULTIES.

3. ASKED BY THE CONGRESSMAN WHETHER THERE WAS SENSITIVITY ABOUT THE SECRETARY'S ROLE IN THE PROCESS OF SETTLEMENT, ARBATOV STATED THAT THUS FAR NOTHING SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN DONE IN DETRIMENT TO SOVIET INTERESTS. HE SAID THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT NO ATTEMPT BE MADE TO DIMINISH SOVIET INFLUENCE AND THAT THE U.S. MUST NOT GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS NOT INVOLVED. HE PERSONALLY FELT THAT SADAT'S RECENT STATEMENTS COULD RAISE SUSPICIONS THAT AMERICAN INFLUENCE HAS "INCREASED THE DIFFICULTIES WE HAVE WITH EGYPT." ARBATOV ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THE WARMING OF RELATIONS BETWEEN EGYPT AND U.S. IS NOT NECESSARILY DISADVANTAGEOUS TO SOVIET UNION.

4. KUDRYAVTSEV TOOK A MORE OBLIQUE APPROACH, CLAIMING THAT SOMETIMES THE U.S. TRIED TO PUT ITSELF IN POSITION OF SUPERIORITY AND THAT THE SOVIETS HAD THE FEELING THAT THE U.S. CONSIDERED ITSELF "BETTER THAN OTHER COUNTRIES" IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. HE REJECTED THE SUGGESTION THAT THE SOVIET UNION MAY NOT HAVE BEEN AS HELPFUL AS IT COULD HAVE BEEN DURING THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT AND DENIED THAT THE SOVIETS HAD ENCOURAGED THE ARABS TO ATTACK, CONTINUE THE CONFLICT, OR, LATER,

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MAINTAIN THE OIL EMBARGO AGAINST THE U.S. ACCORDING TO KUDRYAVTSEV, SOVIETS DO NOT WANT U.S. LEADERS TO FEEL THAT "THEY ALONE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR WORLD PEACE."

5. COMMENT. IN RECENT WEEKS A NUMBER OF INFLUENTIAL SOVIETS HAVE STRESSED TO US THEIR CONCERN THAT THE U.S. MAY BE TRYING TO ESTABLISH A POSITION OF SUPERI-

ORITY. THIS THEME HAS CHARACTERIZED SOME SOVIET COMMENTS ABOUT U.S. DEFENSE POLICY; IT HAS BEEN LESS EXPLICIT IN SOVIET REMARKS ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST. THE SELF-SERVING NATURE OF SUCH COMMENT IS OBVIOUS, AND MUCH OF IT IS NO DOUBT DESIGNED FOR EFFECT. AT THE SAME TIME, WE SUSPECT THAT ONE OF THE ARGUMENTS EMPLOYED TO SELL THE SOVIET DETENTE POLICY TO INTERNAL DOUBTERS IS THAT THE POLICY HAS FACILITATED THE RECOGNITION BY THE U.S. OF SOVIET EQUALITY IN WORLD AFFAIRS. ANY EVIDENCE THAT CAN BE ADDUCED TO THE CONTRARY MAY THUS TOUCH A SENSITIVE NERVE.

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